Living City

VOLUME 18, NO. 2

SUPPLEMENT

WORD OF LIFE

"Sell all your belongings
and give the money to the poor.
Provide for yourselves
purses that don't wear out,
and save your riches in heaven,
where they will never decrease,
because no thief can get to them,
no moth can destroy them."

(Luke 12:33)

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Are you young, aspiring to a life which has an ideal, which is totally committing and calls for a complete change in you? Then listen to Jesus, because no one else in the world will ask as much of you. You are being given an opportunity to prove your faith, your generosity, and your heroism.

Are you an adult, longing for a sound way of life that is committing and yet will not disillusion you? Or, are you an older person, wanting to give the last years of your life to someone who will not deceive you, to live without worries that wear you out?

These words of Jesus are also for you.

They conclude a series of admonishments in which Jesus asks us not to worry over what we will eat or what we will wear but, rather, to act as the birds of the air who do not sow, and the lillies of the field which do not weave. Therefore, we must banish from our hearts all anxieties over the things of this earth. Our Father, who loves us far more than the birds and the flowers, will take care of us himself.

This is why Jesus tells us: *"...Sell all your belongings and give the money to the poor. Provide for yourselves purses that don't wear out, and save your riches in heaven, where they will never decrease, because no thief can get to them, no moth can destroy them" (Luke 12:33).*

In its entirety, and in every word it contains, the Gospel demands everything from us: everything we are and all that we possess.

Prior to Christ's coming into the world, God had never asked so much of man. In the Old Testament, earthly riches were seen as good, as a blessing from God. Likewise, the request for alms for the needy was intended as a means to obtain the benevolence of the Almighty.

Later on, the idea of a reward in the next life became more commonly accepted among members of the Jewish faith. A king, who had been reprimanded for having squandered his possessions, replied, "My ancestors accumulated treasures for this life, but I have accumulated treasures for the next one." The Jewish people however, did not see any contradiction between accumulating wealth here on earth and preparing a treasure in heaven.

The originality of Jesus' words lies in the fact that he demands a total gift. He asks everything from us. He doesn't want us, his children, to be overly concerned about the things of this world. Rather, he wants us to rely on him alone.

He knows that earthly wealth is a tremendous obstacle for us, because it can occupy our hearts, whereas he wants to possess our hearts for himself.

This is why he urges us: *"...Sell all your belongings and give the money to the poor. Provide for yourselves purses that don't wear out, and save your riches in heaven, where they will never decrease, because no thief can get to them, no moth can destroy them" (Luke 12:33).*

If we cannot actually get rid of our possessions, because of family ties or because our social position demands that we live in accordance with our status, we must certainly detach ourselves from them spiritually and consider ourselves to be no more than their administrators. In this way, even while dealing with wealth we can love others, and by administering it on their behalf, we can accumulate a treasure which moths cannot destroy, nor thieves carry off.

But are you sure that you must really keep all of it?

Listen to the voice of God inside of you, and ask for advice if you cannot decide on your own. Then you will discover how many superfluous things there are among

your possessions. Do not keep them. Give. Give to those who have not. Put into practice these words of Jesus: "*...Sell all your belongings and give the money to the poor. Provide for yourselves purses that don't wear out, and save your riches in heaven, where they will never decrease, because no thief can get to them, no moth can destroy them*" *(Luke 12:33).* If you do this, you will fill up purses which do not wear out.

Since we live in the world, it is only logical that we must be concerned with money and other material things. However, God wants us to be *occupied* and not *preoccupied* with them. So only be concerned with securing that amount which is indispensable for you to live in accordance with your social status. As for the rest, "*...Sell all your belongings and give the money to the poor. Provide for yourselves purses that don't wear out, and save your riches in heaven, where they will never decrease, because no thief can get to them, no moth can destroy them*" *(Luke 12:33).*

Paul VI was truly poor. The way in which he wanted to be buried (in a plain coffin, "in the bare earth,") proved this. Shortly before dying he told his brother, "My suitcases for that important trip have been ready for some time."

This, then, is what we must do: we, too, must get our suitcases ready.

In the time of Jesus they may have been called purses, but the meaning is the same. Let us prepare them day by day. Let's fill them with things that might be useful to others. We truly possess that which we give away. Think of how much hunger there is in the world, how much suffering, how many needs....

Let's put every act of love, and every deed done for our neighbors, into this suitcase as well.

Let's do all of these acts of love for him, telling him in our hearts, "This is for you." Let's do them well, perfectly, because they are destined for heaven. They will remain for eternity.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

Each month a "Word of Life" appears in Living City or in its Supplement. The following are experiences that some of our readers shared with us in living the Word of Life.

NUCLEAR MEDICINE

I walked into Mr. N's room at the hospital not knowing what to expect. The last time I had seen him was the week before. I remembered him as a sweet little old man, very independent, who with a frail smile had industriously if not speedily, done everything for himself, walking about with a cane. In my report I stated, I felt he was able to return home with his wife.

But just that morning the report I'd given the week before had been questioned because apparently Mr. N was doing very little alone, seemed lazy and seeking attention. I questioned my own thoroughness and whether I had overlooked something important. "He who is faithful in little . . ." came back to my mind. I was determined that I would put everything aside, go back and start again.

I immediately saw a tremendous change in his performance. He was confused and put his shirt on his feet, complaining continuously of a severe headache.

"Oh, he's always looking for attention," they said when I inquired.

But remembering how he had been with me the week before I returned to him and slowly went through everything, being very careful not to overlook the slightest detail in his behavior. I knew there was a change. "He who is faithful in little . . ." I drew courage and went to the doctor personally and told him how Mr. N seemed much less able to function independently, although all of the lab tests and other exams showed he was getting better and should go home.

It was then decided that he should go for an extremely modern nuclear medicine exam. The next day the doctor thanked me saying, "I think we've saved this man's life."

E. G.

DON'T FORGET THE CLEANING LADY

Earlier this year I worked in a hospital as a secretary to a doctor. For some reason or other, the doctor took a great disliking to the lady who used to clean our office and there had been various unpleasant incidents.

Each morning she would come in to dust as soon as I arrived, in order to be finished by the time the doctor got there. We would chat while she worked.

One morning she felt that his whole desk needed a good cleaning and so she stacked together all the papers that were laid out neatly on the desk, dusted everything and then re-arranged the papers according to her liking. The desk looked clean but the papers were all out of order. A short time later the doctor arrived. I knew he was very fussy about his papers and the minute he sat down he asked what had happened. He was very upset with me and told me I wasn't to touch his desk again. I immediately thought that I had

the right to defend myself and say that I hadn't done it. But I felt that to love right then meant that I had to take upon myself the limitations of others. In this case it meant not saying anything so as not to aggravate the tension that already existed between these two people.

Even though the cleaning lady didn't know anything about this incident, a beautiful friendship started to grow out of it. She began to confide in me, telling me about her brother who was dying of leukemia. She was working in order to earn enough money to send home to pay for his transfusions. I listened to her and assured her that I would pray for him. I also got the chance to mention these things to the doctor believing that he, too, would come to understand her.

After some months, her brother died, and during that time we shared a lot together, as I tried to live the phrase, "Weep with those who weep", to be a presence of Jesus for her.

We moved from that hospital and we hardly ever see her, but when we were having a party at work recently the doctor said, "By the way, don't forget to invite the cleaning lady and her family."

H. M.

"WHATEVER YOU ASK"

I am a social worker. Recently, I had made arrangements for a family broken by separation to place their daughter in a group home for girls. After two weeks, I was informed that the girl refused to attend school, something she had done before, and was threatening to run away from the home. The staff at the home was worried since there was no court order to demand that she attend school. They requested that I arrange for a truancy charge against her. I wanted to do what was best for the girl. I spoke to her briefly but she seemed very uncooperative. I tried to call those responsible for court proceedings. No one was available at that time. Uncertain about what to do, the word of life came to my mind, "All you ask the Father in my name, he will give you." I called a friend who also wants to live the Gospel and together we asked the Father in Jesus' name to help us find the right solution for this girl.

The next day, I called the group home to speak to that girl again. They informed me she had a change of heart and decided to go to school. She had spent a good evening at the home and even participated in activities with the other girls.

A SIDE STREET

I was driving and turned into a side street, just then a car was backing out of that street and did not see me. I blew the horn. The other driver stopped the car and began shouting and cursing at me. I remembered the word of life, "Love your enemies . . .," so I rolled down my window and with a smile I said, "I'm sorry, I must have startled you." The other driver smiled back and said, "Thank you, if you hadn't blown your horn I would have hit you because I didn't see your car."

R. D. M.

"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES . . ."

We recently had as a guest an exchange student from another country. After she left, I asked for the cooperation of my four daughters so that we could restore our household to normal, since many things needed to be altered in the way of sleeping rooms and closets. Three of the girls worked diligently with me, but one always had something else that needed to be done at the same time. She shared little in our effort.

After three days of this situation, I decided that I had to teach her a lesson. I told myself that the next time she wanted a favor, I would show her and refuse.

The next morning, as I was doing the laundry, I saw a blouse that was hers. Laundering it might possibly be a mother's duty, but I knew then that there was no way I would press it for her. As I continued to do the ironing that afternoon, that blouse was continually in my sight. Still angry, I could not bring myself to iron it for her. As the afternoon passed, I began to feel more irritated and upset. I knew why I was so unhappy, but I didn't want to give in!

Then the word of life came very clearly to mind, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you . . . " It was then I knew that I must love her, so I ironed her blouse very carefully and with much love. A special joy came over me as I knew that I had restored unity and that I could now see her with new eyes.

M. K.

attention!!

Circumstances obliged us to change the dates of the 1979 East Coast Mariapolis to be held at Alfred University, New York. Instead of taking place from August 12th to August 18th, it will be from August 5th to August 11th.

LIVING THE GOSPEL

Igino Giordani shows how evangelization of the world can only be accomplished by Christians who graft God into their very being, by living the gospel. Through this human/divine relationship we can show Christ to our society.

The more Christians live the gospel and so proclaim the good news, the more they can be used by God as instruments in building his kingdom. The daily sharing of our lives with one another can be likened to a time of pruning. This pruning allows the idea of God to develop and blossom within our souls which, through his presence is then transformed, becoming a temple of the Holy Trinity. Thus it might be said that man's destiny is to become partners with God in a tireless transmitting of the divine into the human.

In all probability those who live in this way will meet with opposition and contempt, and will suffer loneliness, but their longing for God will not be diminished. Outside, the frenzied activities of men and machines will continue, as will suffering and evil. However, these will not succeed in disrupting that heaven within, protected by silence, where the divine is harbored. Nor will these succeed in destroying the power of living the present moment through which they can discover and obey the will of God.

Today many young people are attempting to re-discover basic values. They gather in various groups, large and small, and draw strength from one another as they search for ways to change a society which is threatened by so much perversion and misuse, such as the development of nuclear weaponry, tyranny, war, drug addiction and pornography.

It often happens however that this new consciousness of the young is linked to groups which discount faith, or reduce it to a relic of bygone ideologies, and often these groups look to violence as the means for social change, a superficial reaction.

Despite their mixed bag of politics and anarchy, these youths are nevertheless able to understand the substance of faith by observing the actions of those who are leading authentic Christian lives, for example, the bishops in countries where liberty is threatened, and life itself is at stake. Serene and strong believers, they have begun a counter-revolution in response to the wanton, and violent behavior of the tyrannical rulers. These faithful disciples of Christ show through their steadfast conviction a powerful witness to the fact that without faith in God one cannot live — one dies. One dies spiritually, and often physically, with anguish, as we have seen in the third world.

Living the gospel and thereby giving the good news to others, is to graft God onto our souls. We must take care not to allow distractions or illusions to weaken the effort. If God is everything for us, then our actions toward our brothers and ourselves will reflect his inspiration. If on the other hand we are insincere, substituting for his powerful presence in our actions, a relationship without foundations, then our interior life will be as empty as a shadow and the divine force within our grasp, in our hearts and minds, will crumble.

This grafting of Christ onto the soul, our "christification," so to speak, is a profound uninterrupted process, winding through all the moments of the day. It uses the gospel, the sacraments, the Church and society — the sacred and the profane — taking everything to the foot of the cross, which is the focal point. Over all this activity stretch the arms of Christ as at the completion of his life on earth, giving life to our awareness of our duty to God and man. When the soul has been prepared by such a painstaking and purifying process, the graft "takes" and the soul becomes as it were, transformed into Christ. This takes place particularly by means of the Eucharist, whereby Christ implants himself at the very center of our being. He makes himself our being: he makes himself us because we make ourselves him, and the soul becomes aware of what St. Paul experienced, ". . . and the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me . . . " (Gal 2,20)

If the idea — or rather the presence — of God is implanted this way in our minds, if God lives in our whole being, then it follows that all one learns, feels or does daily will be undertaken in cooperation with the sovereign guest. This dual existence elevates our daily life. No longer will each day be divided into isolated activities such as work, human fellowship, and the cultivation of one's own personality, but it will be enriched by an intimate and higher life, that of the spirit, from which comes a dignity worthy of the freedom promised to us as sons of God. The entire day will be filled with his presence, which gives us strength in our trials and joy in our difficulties. This presence leads to a spontaneous evangelization — so much needed in today's society which is not so much atheist as ignorant and indifferent to the gospel. The whole of life becomes a wonderful undertaking which intensifies our faith. There is an enhancement of every human act which is performed with the intention of honoring God, of realizing and doing his will. In this way we become "other Christs" always in a human/divine relationship. "The fact is that whether you eat or drink — whatever you do — you should do all for the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10,31)

Behavior such as this injects what is sacred into the secular, sanctity into work, and eternity into the uncertain present. It brings into being the universal priesthood and makes it an integral part of each Christian. Being a Christian is often thought of as somewhat removed from the ordinary and so many, perhaps even while striving to develop an interior discipline in order to grow in virtue and, therefore, nearness to God, do not necessarily see the re-

(continued on page 8)

THE ESSENTIAL IS MISSING

We are in lent.

Why is it so difficult to talk about penance in our modern times?

Good people in certain areas, especially in small towns, still accept the parish priests's invitation to penance. And do it.

We hear of pilgrimages entailing bodily sufferings, which throngs of Christians make to Fatima and to Lourdes, and they are not usually fanatical people.

The fact is that, despite the survival of these events, for Christians today in general, the word penance has rather fallen into disuse.

And perhaps this is right. Perhaps it is fortunate because it warns us that to add penance to the Christian life as it is being lived (or rather as it is not being lived), is like cultivating a flower in a pot destined for the balcony of a house that is not yet built.

We can feel that the greater part, the essential is missing, and that, therefore, the lesser part, the accessory, has no meaning.

Because the Christian life is to do God's will and the Christian often does his own or does God's, but unwillingly . . .

Because to be Christians means to love even our enemies. But who thinks of that? It is already a lot if we avoid revenge . . .

Because to be Christians means to love each other, to be one heart and one soul with the other Christians, but that is too difficult . . . Each person thinks of his or her own needs and that is enough to do.

Because to be Christians means to obey the Church, and to obey those who represent it and their directives. But today it is old fashioned to obey, and the Church is considered not to be too convincing . . .

Because . . . because . . . because . . .

How much is missing that should be normal in our Christian life before adding on something particular like a penance.

And yet, Pope John, who certainly was not out of touch with his age, but attracted the world with his goodness, says age-old things which, however, reacquire all their vitality, because expressed by those lips, suggested by that heart, and firstly lived by that truly, fully Christian soul and then made public. And because they are truths expressed by him, they become fashionable again.

He states that: 'In addition to the penances we necessarily have to meet with in the inevitable sufferings of this mortal life, Christians should be so generous as to offer to God voluntary mortification as well, following the example of our divine Redeemer . . . In this, the saints of the Church are also an example and an encouragement; the mortifications they inflicted on their often most innocent bodies fill us with wonder and almost perplexity. Faced with these champions of Christian holiness, how can we not refuse to the Lord some deprivation or voluntary pain even on behalf of the faithful, who perhaps have so many faults to atone for?'

Chiara Lubich

Taken from the book **Yes Yes No No**, *published by New City London, 1977.*

A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE

by Michael Heinz

My childhood took place in West Berlin, where I was the youngest of seven children. I remember how in my early childhood, my parents tried to live their faith. My mother took care of the family at home, and she was the one who maintained the family atmosphere. My father was a businessman, strongly committed to staying faithful to God; he wanted to be more than a Christian in name only. He always tried to be good to people, and this was very difficult in his life as a businessman. He was a food wholesaler, and his customers included people from religious orders, and poor people with whom he was generous. His generosity was something that I sensed but did not fully comprehend at the time. It is something I can only appreciate now, looking back, having known many of the families involved, and also having heard comments from others who had been in touch with us at that time.

Another of my childhood memories is that of visiting my grandmother, in a little town near the Rhine. She was already very old, and she always stayed sitting in a chair. She was constantly quoting the Bible, which she knew by heart. I know that she was always praying for the whole family, for all of our needs. It was something very inspiring. She died many years ago, while I was in Loppiano. (1) I've always thought that my being there might have been a consequence of her prayers, of that way of life which she exemplified even when she was so close to death.

An important factor in my childhood was the school that I attended. It was a parochial school, and even though there may have been particular things that I didn't care for, as a whole I know that I was immersed in an atmosphere that was quite beautiful. Only now in looking back can I see some of its tremendous value. For example, I was able to get a sense of Jesus, even though at this point it wasn't very specific. I don't remember that I had a particular relationship with Jesus, but I do remember how I responded when there was some work to be done for the missions. We used to collect aluminum foil for them. Being involved in such a project, or even just seeing slides of missions, struck me very much, because I was certain that missionary work was what I wanted to do with my life. From my house to school was about an hour or an hour and a half walking distance, and I usually went by bus. But when I heard about the missions, I decided to walk home each day to save the bus fare for them.

After the parochial elementary school, I went to a public high school. That was a struggle from the religious aspect, because I was no longer in that religious environment. Also, my religious education during that time was pretty sketchy, since only about ten percent of the students were Catholic, and they were not very interested in religion. Besides, our religion classes did not take place with much regularity. In a sense, this situation had a positive effect on me, because I felt the need to get informed about my Faith, to see what was going on around me. I was constantly being challenged.

During this period, I was looking for an answer to many questions, general ones about the world, and personal ones about what I should be doing in this world. I tried to write in our school magazine, published by the student government which was concerned with such problems as a unified Europe, the Third World, world hunger, and things like that. These questions struck me very much, so that I felt a strong need to get involved in them.

In addition, I thought about becoming a priest. This idea was

vague in my mind, in the sense that I liked it because I was thinking, "I have to live an authentic life. I want to make a total commitment. I can't be wishy-washy." Entering the priesthood looked like a way. But on the other hand, I also saw some of the responsibilities of that life which didn't appeal to me very much. It seemed to me that God was asking something else of me, other than becoming a priest. Maybe it could be to go to Asia or Africa as a doctor. You can see that my ideas were rather confused!

Another factor which was very decisive in my life at that time was having to go to the hospital twice for surgery. These were good opportunities for me to do some thinking. Also, I suffered. This was a necessary prerequisite to opening new horizons in my soul. For example, I was very timid. I saw the need to get in touch with other people, but that effort took a tremendous overcoming of myself. Then, at the same moment when I though that I should be going to more things in my parish, some of the young people invited me to their meetings. Up to that time, I had been going to Mass but not getting involved in any way. So I went to some of the meetings of the youth there, and I began to get involved in their discussion groups and things like that. And then, all of a sudden the leader of the youth

group left, and they needed a new leader. When they elected me, I was completely puzzled. That night when I went home, I thought that maybe God was asking for something from me. This was at the same time that I needed the second operation on my knee. So a few days later, I went to the hospital again.

About that time, a new priest came to our parish. Since he wanted to find out what was going on, what the youth were doing, for one thing, he got my name and came to visit me. He knew something about the Focolare Movement, and he brought me a book peoples' experiences of life. As I read a few of them, I was amazed by the way they were talking about Jesus. They seemed to think of him as a close friend. This idea, along with many other things, seemed strange. I couldn't believe that there could really be people like that. I didn't know how to place them; I wondered if they were old-fashioned or what? Yet, their authenticity struck me deeply. And so I decided to find out what was going on. For this reason, I decided to subscribe to their magazine.

Very soon I understood that to love Jesus, I had to love him in the poorest of people. So I went to the main train station where there were many alcoholics and derelicts, and I met one of them. When he asked me for a cigarette, we started talking. He told me about his life, the many difficulties that he had had to face. Although I didn't have anything to give him, I felt that this was Jesus here beside me. So I walked along with him. It took most of the afternoon because we walked all the way to the place where he was staying. It was a building in ruins, where there was a mattress and also rats running around. I was shocked, but at the same time, I would say that I felt almost at home, because I had made a friend. The afternoon that we spent together was beautiful.

Having understood that I had to love Jesus in the least of my brothers, I soon saw that that really meant everyone, including the people at home: my mother, my father, my brothers and sisters, the friends who came. At school it included the teachers, my classmates, everybody. I felt that I had to see them in a new way, and this awareness was a particular gift. Also, at that moment I really was able to do it, with no difficulty, and even though people may have been making fun of me, I felt completely calm, I could see beyond all of that.

In particular, there was one history class which had been unbelievably boring. There had been some kind of mutual, unspoken agreement between the teacher and the class, "Don't you bother me, and I won't bother you." The teacher was giving lecture after lecture, and we were sitting there thinking of other things. All of a sudden I thought, "This situation cannot go on. She must feel as if she is talking to the wall!" Immediately I began to make the effort to ask questions. The first time I did it, the whole class started to laugh, because they thought I was trying to make fun of her. But then they saw that I was sincere. Within a short time, this became one of our most interesting classes. We talked about politics and current events, and there was a real interchange of ideas. It came alive because we talked about questions which were not just theoretical, but about events which concerned us. Besides this experience, I found a new relationship with many other people at school. For example, a friendship developed with one person whom I had completely overlooked until then.

Graduation day was very special for me. I was not the best student and there had been the possibility that I would fail. On the last day there was an oral exam. I got to school in the morning, only to find that my name was on the list for the afternoon. So I went home in some anxiety. As I stopped by a church, I heard the Gospel for that day. It was about the New Commandment, ". . . love one another just as I have loved you." (2) This gave me the strength to go home and to put aside my worries. Then when I went back in the afternoon, I tried to love the teacher, because I understood that what would remain of that day would be my love for that teacher. Whether I graduated that year or another year was really not so important. What mattered was to give my life to Jesus in every moment. At the same time, it was necessary for me to graduate since I was about to go to Loppiano to continue my formation in the spirituality of the Focolare. But I saw that this too was in God's hands. So I tried to do what he wanted from me in each moment. When I heard that I had passed the exam, I said in my heart, "Thank you, Lord. You did it." Two days later I was in Loppiano.

I have to say that this way of life continues to impress me; it is far beyond anything I could ever have imagined. Since it is something that comes from God, it is like a diamond: every time I see it, it's from a different angle. I am convinced that there is no longing, either of mine or of anyone in the world, that cannot be answered by

(continued on page 8)

1) School of formation in the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement near Florence, Italy.
2) John 15:12.

1979 MARIAPOLIS

Again this year there will be three Mariapolises!

NORTHWEST

Place: St. Martin's College
Lacey, Washington
Date: July 22 - evening through
July 28 - morning

EAST COAST

Place: Alfred University
Alfred, New York
Date: August 5 - evening through
August 11 - morning

SOUTHWEST

You will be informed about the Southwest Mariapolis as soon as the date and the location are known.

A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE

(continued from page 7)

this spirituality, which we call our Ideal. With it, everything makes sense; everything has a reason, a significance, especially if I try to transform every little thing, every little frustration there may be in my soul, into love. If I abandon myself in God, then I see how everything that surrounds me, from the most banal to the highest spiritual things, everything is a way of having a relationship with God and also with other people. For me, the Ideal is God and God has become man, so every aspect of human life can also be seen within this Ideal. It depends on me how much I manage to live it. It is rela-ly the most human life imaginable. If I live the Ideal I can be a man; it's just as simple as that. I can be a fully human being.

Finally, I feel that the Ideal makes me universal. I can establish a relationship with anyone no matter where he comes from, whether he is Jewish or Moslem, comes from India or China, is an atheist or a drug addict whatever. There is always something I can identify with. We are in the same boat in a way and this is a great joy. There is nothing here in the city of New York that need distract me. I just have to change my outlook. If there is something that distracts me, then maybe I am a little bit off the track, and I am not any longer as perfect in loving as I should be. ■

LIVING THE GOSPEL

(continued from page 4)

lationship between their Christianity and earning money, for example, but one will truly be alive in the measure that one is capable of channeling all his daily activities toward a relationship with God.

Each person, even the weakest of creatures, sick, poor or helpless, can bring healing, enrich humanity, and strengthen his or her brothers. Thus nothing is ever useless. Every thought, word and deed within this vision of life created by God, helps to provide material for the construction of his kingdom. The whole day takes on a priestly value from the association made by man between the life of heaven and the needs of earth.

This association gives a "soul" to society, without which it would quickly decay. Having found a link with life, the life of God, this new society reacts against the idols of death, not allowing itself to be overpowered by the forces of violence, hatred, fear and vice. "Because God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being; and the creatures of the world are wholesome." (Wis. 1, 13-14)

The interiorization of Christianity within the soul is not so much a problem of institutional reform (though this too is necessary in order to keep the faith alive and vibrant) as it is a problem of a per-personal "metanoia," or conversion. It requires a continuing, daily commitment to immerse oneself in the deepening mystery of God, by which the soul is absorbed into his power, which is love. ■

WORD OF LIFE FOR APRIL

"He had always loved
those who were his own
in the world,
and he loved them
to the end."

(John 13:1)

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